

**NEWARK  
PUBLIC  
INFORMATION  
OFFICE**



City Hall, 920 Broad Street, Room 214  
Newark, New Jersey 07102  
(973) 733-8004  
Sharpe James, Mayor  
Pamela E. Goldstein, Director

Friday, January 30, 2004

For Immediate Release

Please Contact: Pamela E. Goldstein (973) 733-6368

## **James Shares City's Accomplishments and Lays Out Future Plans in 18<sup>th</sup> Annual State of the City Address**

Newark Mayor Sharpe James delivered his 18<sup>th</sup> annual State of the City last night before a packed City Council Chamber where he extolled the city's "unprecedented" housing growth and economic development, while pledging to work with the school district in securing land and building new schools. He also took on the critics of revaluation maintaining that that all property owners now pay their fair share of taxes.

In the shadow of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Mayor declared, "Newark is getting bigger and better. Our quality of life is improving," he said in pointing the city's transportation infrastructure; waterfront, downtown and neighborhood development; job growth and stable financial outlook that has lured major Fortune 500 companies to locate in New Jersey's largest city.

Reiterating his credo that reviving a city is "not just bricks and mortar," James pulled the surprise of the evening when he unveiled a \$3 million check to enable the Newark School District to cover the cost of swimming pools in the new Science Park and Central Ward High Schools.

The Mayor recalled his days as a professor at Essex County College when he designed a new gymnasium that contained a pool, but the board of trustees, who deemed it a luxury, shot down the swimming facility. "How come a pool is thought of as part of the curriculum in suburban schools, but is viewed as a luxury in urban cities?" he asked.

-more-

James ad 1

"I was hurt by the failure to put a pool at Essex County College, and I never forgot. Now I am in a position to provide Newark students with an opportunity to learn to swim, to learn a lifetime sport. Our children should have every opportunity that a suburban student has. We are not going to fail our children!" he exclaimed to resounding applause.

Referring to the 2003 revaluation of property, James noted that as a councilman, he had stood with five of his colleagues in opposing revaluation in 1976, when Newark was not as prosperous as it is today. "Because of our courage, because of the stand we took, some homeowners have saved over \$46,000 in taxes, and some have saved even more than \$100,000 in property taxes over the 46-year delay in revaluation.

"Now, he said, "every ward and neighborhood is being treated fairly, according to the law, which requires every city in New Jersey to revalue its municipal property every 10 years."

James pointed to increases in municipal collection rates and the use of rent monies from a renegotiated lease with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which was used to offset the effects of revaluation and enable Newark to offer property owners the "lowest property tax rate possible."

To assist senior citizens living on fixed incomes, the Mayor said he would use his position as a State Senator to introduce legislation increasing the current \$250 senior citizen property tax reduction to \$500.

James lauded Marion Bolden, Newark's state-appointed schools superintendent for announcing the construction of a \$70 million Science Park High School and for partnering with the city in the building of the Belmont-Runyon replacement school and a new Central High School.

"This is just the beginning of new schools to be constructed in Newark. Along with public safety, the education of our children will remain our highest priority," the Mayor said. James said he agreed with the opinions shared by President George Bush and U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton, with whom he met last week in Washington, that "no child should be left behind!"

"It's the law," he said, pledging that the city will continue to work with the school system in property acquisition and in serving as policy and fiscal advisors to the board.

-more-

James ad 2

Just two years after the attacks of September 11, 2001, James said public safety remains the city's "highest priority." Homeland Security and other block grants have been used to purchase new vehicles and equipment and to train officers in the fight against crime and terrorism, he noted. In the past year, he said that 24-hour-a-day guards have been placed at all the city's reservoirs and to man metal detectors at the entrance of City Hall and other municipal buildings.

James reported an overall drop in crime by 5.72 percent, while acknowledging there was a spike in homicides in 2003 over 2002.

He applauded the opening a new state-of-the-art firehouse on Clinton Avenue at Irvine Turner Boulevard, and hailed the complete desegregation of all municipal firehouses. "unlike so many other cities across this state, in Newark, we are proud to say: there are no all white fire companies; there are no all black fire companies; there are no all Hispanic fire companies. We have created a rainbow at each firehouse.

Regarding job development, James said the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training, with its "One-Stop Career Center, provided more than 500 Newark residents with training and jobs in high-demand occupations." In a partnership with the New Jersey Department of Labor, the Career Center will move into 990 Broad Street in March and share space with the Labor Department's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Unemployment Services and Division and Employment Services Division. "A one stop career center all under one roof," he declared.

He vowed to increase access and outreach health services and to move ahead on the Mulberry Street development project.

Construction of the Joseph G. Minish Waterfront Park will begin in 2004 and "we will break ground for Home Depot and H.R. Russell's Springfield Village," he said.

James announced that the new Ironbound Aquatic Center, long plagued by environmental problems, would open this spring and that the city would begin refurbishing City Hall in time for its 2006 centennial.

-more-

James ad 3

The official also offered "full support," for the proposed \$400 million Mulberry Street Urban Renewal Company's plan to build 2000 market rate condominiums and associated amenities creating a new neighborhood behind City Hall and south along Mulberry Street. He also announced that the Gale Company of Florham Park has acquired the old Westinghouse Property adjacent to the north Broad Street train station and will demolish the building and replace it with 200 market rate condominiums and ground floor retail amenities. This project is part of a larger redevelopment of the James Street Commons Historic District.

Additionally, the Mayor promised to improve the operations of Newark Symphony Hall and announced a new Public Arts Commission to oversee the creation of art and sculpture in public spaces.

James detailed the City's development progress over the last year, noting the awarding of contracts to H.R. Russell and WKA associates for a mixed use new Springfield Village at Springfield Avenue and Jones Street that will include a shopping mall, restaurant and 324 units of upscale housing. Close by this development site preparation will soon begin for a new Home Depot.

In setting out his goals for 2004, James pledged to continue assisting the Newark Board of Education and to press the Port Authority to treat the Newark Liberty International Airport and Port Newark leases "on a parity with New York."